

WETLANDS & RIPARIAN CORRIDORS

WHAT ARE THEY?

WHAT DO THEY DO? WHY DOES THIS MATTER?



Wetlands are areas that are saturated by surface water or ground water, where such water occurs at a frequency and duration sufficient to support types of vegetation that are adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Simply stated, wetlands are areas with plants and soils that are best-suited to wet conditions.



Riparian corridors are waterways and the land area directly along the waterway. When left in a more natural state, they are buffers between the water and many human impacts.

Wetlands and riparian corridors have many functions. They:

- **Equip us to handle flood emergencies:** Wetlands and riparian corridors can act like sponges and absorb floodwater. An acre of wetland can store between 1-1.5 million gallons of floodwater.
- **Enhance water quality:** The vegetation in these areas reduces erosion of areas along the bank (especially riparian areas) because of roots in the soil. Both the underground and aboveground parts of a plant keep waste and other residue like sediment out of water when it flows to a stream or river after the rain. Wetlands act as filters and purifiers because they absorb and hold water before it soaks into the ground. Wetlands can remove as much as 90 percent of solids in water.
- **Provide various species places to live:** The strips of land that follow the river are critical travel corridors because they allow animals to move freely. Shade from trees and other plants cools water to a temperature that allows aquatic-based life to survive. The waterbodies themselves serve as habitat that allows for shelter to hide, breed, or sleep. Although wetlands only make up about 5 percent of the land surface in the contiguous United States, wetlands are home to 31 percent of our nation's plant species.
- **Boost aesthetic & property values:** Market prices can sometimes reflect the "quality of life" or amenity values provided by wetlands and riparian corridors. For residential development in urban areas, the market price of properties with views of natural areas is often greater than the price of similar properties without these views.
- **Offer spaces for recreation & education:** These areas allow for great places to enjoy and learn about the outdoors. Opportunities for recreation include parks and trails. Here, classes and tours can also interact up-close with the featured educational topic.